

THE PROGRAMS OF THE SOCIETY OF SYSTEMATIC ZOOLOGY

There are many organizations of zoologists interested in particular groups of animals or particular aspects of natural history. Among the former the Coleopterists' Society was recently formed to fill a hitherto neglected niche, and among the latter we have such organizations as the Ecological Society of America and the Society for the Study of Evolution.

In all of zoology (all of biology, in fact) there is one subject which is basic, which is fundamental to all the others, which frequently is of prime importance in preparing the foundations for research in other fields. This is the broad field of systematics. It is a primary branch of zoology, dealing with the most fundamental laws, and divided into many subjects which we often think of as unrelated. It includes evolution, geographic distribution, geologic distribution, anatomy, morphology, embryology, life history, classification, descriptive taxonomy, and nomenclature, as well as portions of genetics, ecology, limnology, oceanography, paleontology, and other fields.

In all these subjects, zoologists working on very different groups of animals make use of the same principles, the same theories, and often the same practices. A large number of zoologists thus have a common meeting ground in systematics, but ever since specialization became widespread in zoology, particularly specialization as to the group of animals studied, there has been no organization which attempted to coordinate the systematic work of zoologists or to improve the teaching and practice of systematics. This is the gap in our long list of zoologic societies that led in 1948 to the formation of the Society of Systematic Zoology.

Although there was widespread recognition of the need for such an organization to bring together taxonomists in all fields and promote their joint interests, there was no precedent to aid in formulating a concrete program for the new society. Now, after two years of organization and shake-down, it is possible to see specific ways in which this union of taxonomists may be of great value to working zoologists and to students

desiring to become taxonomists. Only a few of these projects are as yet under way, with others now in preparation. Still others may be undertaken as the need arises, at the suggestion of taxonomists. Some of the projects now under study are described below.

Three general types of projects are occupying the attention of the Society: Major projects leading toward specific concrete results (numbers 1-3 below), more general projects for long-term activities (numbers 4-8), and miscellaneous activities of service or interest to taxonomists (numbers 9-13).

1. **TEXTBOOK OF SYSTEMATIC ZOOLOGY.** The Committee on Education and Instruction in Systematic Zoology has made a study of the training of taxonomists and the needs of education and individual training. Their first definite proposal is that the SSZ sponsor the preparation of a textbook of systematic zoology to help fill a basic and long-felt need in both teaching and research. The committee was authorized to proceed and will cooperate as fully as possible with persons interested in this project or already working in it. This program will take several years to complete.

2. **JOURNAL FOR PRINCIPLES OF SYSTEMATIC ZOOLOGY.** The Council of the SSZ has postponed action on the proposal to establish a regular journal for non-descriptive papers, but there is widespread feeling that this is one of the "musts" for the Society.

3. **NEWS LETTERS.** Experience gained from the publication of the first news letter has led the council to direct that the News Letter in the future contain principally the records of the Society and its activities, and that if possible it be published twice a year,—in the spring and fall.

4. **FAUNAL HANDBOOKS.** An elaborate study was made by the Committee on Faunal Handbooks to determine the adequateness of existing handbooks throughout the animal kingdom. A very detailed report was made at the 1949 annual meeting. This project is being continued and may well lead to sponsorship of new handbooks by the society.

5. ZOOLOGICAL RECORD. The Society desires to help make the Record as useful as possible. It is indispensable to taxonomists and should receive their support. The Committee for Cooperation with the Abstracting Journals has made arrangements to act as sales agent for the Record in the United States and urges zoologists to subscribe to the section relating to their field of interest. Other means are being sought for aiding the Record and improving its usefulness.

6. STANDARDIZATION. Many practices, terminologies, and presentations can be made more useful through uniformity by agreement. The Committee on Policy, Standards, and Principles has discussed several possibilities and is continuing this work.

7. DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION. The society has already undertaken several projects along this line. The News Letters are intended to keep the members posted on certain types of information, such as the committees of the society, its members, and their activities. The annual meetings are now being planned to contribute to this aspect, and contacts with the affiliated societies may provide a means of spreading useful information about taxonomy.

8. CURRENT RESEARCH PROJECTS. The Publication Committee last year undertook to assemble a list of the current research projects of all taxonomists who could be reached by a hastily assembled organization of subcommittees. The resulting list was published in the first news letter.

9. SYMPOSIA AT ANNUAL MEETINGS. The council instructed the Secretary to attempt to arrange a symposium-type of meeting at Cleveland, Ohio, in December 1950. Tentative plans now call for a two-hour session of three invited papers on a subject concerned with the importance of taxonomy to zoology in general. If this meeting is a success, open sessions for papers on general systematic subjects will be arranged for future meetings.

10. IDENTIFICATION SERVICE. The Committee on Information hopes to provide means for zoologists to get aid in the identification of zoologic material. In some fields this service

is already available, and the society's membership applications give some information on the availability of help from individuals. Further work on this is necessary before the society can announce an actual identification service.

11. COPYRIGHT OF OPINIONS OF THE ICZN. It has been brought to the attention of the council that the claim by the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature that it has a copyright on its publications, and its refusal to permit reprinting of the summaries of recent Opinions, has already twice resulted in the elimination of these worthwhile items from a general reference book on taxonomic methods. The council is considering the possibility of asking the Society to express its views on this subject.

12. MICROFILM PUBLICATION OF NEW NAMES. A new service to colleges and individuals has been in operation for several years by a midwestern company for the microfilming of doctoral dissertations and monographs. A microfilm copy is placed in the university's library, another in the Library of Congress for copyright, and the negative is then stored. An abstract is published, with notice of the price at which microfilm copies can be obtained. At least one systematic paper with new species has been so handled. Is this publication? The society will be asked to seek either to have the practice recognized under the International Rules or discouraged.

13. NOMENCLATURE CONTROVERSY. Because of lack of information on the current controversy over the actions at Paris, the council has postponed any decision. All interested persons are invited to submit pertinent information which might aid the council to take a stand for the society.

The SSZ now has over 550 members among zoologists and paleontologists. It invites application for membership from all persons who are interested in any phase of systematic zoology. The dues are only \$1.00 per year.

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